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MUNICIPAL PROBLEMS OF CHICAGO

The fundamental problem with which Chicago now has to cope is to secure a new city charter. For years every mayor in his annual message has called attention to this basic need; for years citizens and associations have directed their every effort towards its solution. Only when this is accomplished can Chicago take up other pressing questions with the assurance of being able to solve them successfully and quickly.

Although this is universally recognized, such were the conditions that for a long time it seemed impossible to do anything. Petty party jealousies prevented uniform action on the part of Chicago's representatives. The city is Democratic in its politics, the county Republican, and it seemed as though each party feared lest any legislation affecting Chicago might affect its political prestige.

Within the city limits of Chicago there are even to-day not less than eight separate tax-levying bodies. It is clear that a new charter would bring about the consolidation of most of these bodies into one, and every office-holder, therefore, fearing for the loss of his official head, did everything he could to frustrate any such scheme. But finally, the steadily growing popular demand for a new charter, voiced by the city council, by newspapers, and many semi-public organizations, put a quietus to the opposition, and after much effort the State legislature last April adopted a resolution "that there shall be submitted to the electors of this State for adoption or rejection, at the next election of members of the General Assembly, a proposition to amend the Constitution of this State."

This amendment gives power to the General Assembly "to pass any law providing a scheme or charter of local municipal government for the city of Chicago. The law so passed may provide for consolidating in the municipal government of the city of Chicago the powers now vested in the city, the Board of Education, the township, park, and other local governments and authorities having jurisdiction confined to one within said territory." This amendment further authorizes the legislature to "abolish all offices, the function of which shall be otherwise provided for; to create municipal courts in the city of Chicago and abolish the offices of justices of the peace,

police magistrates, and constables in and for the territory within said city," and finally to "pass all laws which it may deem requisite to effectually provide a complete system of local municipal government in and for the city of Chicago."

Next November this proposed amendment to the constitution will be submitted to the suffrage of the voters of the State. While it is hoped that it will be adopted, this is by no means certain, although Chicago casts about one-third of the entire vote of the State. In the excitement and uproar of a Presidential election the special ballot is easily lost sight of, and home dissensions or apathy of the voters may defeat the object in view, as the constitution provides that only "if a majority of the electors voting at said election shall vote for the proposed amendments, they shall become part of this constitution." That such a thing is thought possible is proved by the fact that the City Council of Chicago has recently appointed a special committee of seven which is to carry on a campaign on behalf of the amendment.

If the amendment is adopted, the next legislature, meeting in January, 1905, may and undoubtedly will "pass all laws which *it may deem requisite* to effectually provide a complete system of local municipal government for the city of Chicago." And then the struggle will begin. Every interest that will be affected by a consolidating measure will fight for its existence; fencing for party advantage, "wire-pulling," "log-rolling," and every other political device known will be brought to play upon the "country legislator," who, not being familiar with the needs of a large city, and bewildered by the many demands made upon him, will not know which way to turn, and may possibly defeat the honest efforts of the well-meaning members of the assembly.

That this is not a pessimistic view may be seen from the experience had when the resolution for the constitutional amendment was before the legislature. In April, 1900, Mayor Carter H. Harrison, in his annual message to the City Council, said, "We can weld the present taxing bodies exercising municipal functions within the limits of Chicago into an harmonious whole by which useless officers may be dispensed with." And again, in April, 1902, the mayor recommended: "Earnest effort should be made to bring about the ultimate extinction of all separate taxing bodies except the city of Chicago and the Board of Education within Chicago's

limits. The towns, the parks, the sanitary district, and the county, all should be brought under one common care and direction. . . . The fact of Chicago's management of public affairs and exercise of municipal functions being divided up among eight different corporations, each levying its own taxes, maintaining its full complement of officers and employees, managing its own affairs, and spending its own money without regard to unity of action or community of purpose, works irremediable injury to good local government. . . . The divided responsibility for government in the territory of Chicago between the county and the city is productive of evil and should speedily and permanently be ended."

These recommendations of Mayor Harrison were generally approved by public opinion and urged upon the legislature by the Council, the Civic Federation of Chicago, and other societies, but with all their efforts they succeeded only in securing the amendment in a garbled form.

The most important thing that Chicago will have to get from the State legislature will probably be the hardest task of all,—namely, a change of the revenue laws. As the matter stands to-day, the city does not receive nearly as much revenue from taxation as it ought to have. Not that the taxes should be higher; they are—although lower than in most other cities—fully high enough if they were only paid as honestly by the large property interests as they are by the smaller tax-payer. The property, real and personal, within the limits of the great city of Chicago, with its area of 190.6 square miles, its nearly two millions of inhabitants, its stupendous business interests, its magnificent palaces, and its many multi-millionaires, represents a far greater value than a little over two billions of dollars, the present valuation figure. This is but about \$10,700,000 per square mile, while New York's valuation is not less than thirty millions per square mile; Boston's, \$27,700,000; Philadelphia's, \$12,600,000, and Baltimore's, \$15,400,000. What makes the present revenue laws particularly inadequate for the needs of the city is the plan prescribed for the distribution of the taxes. Under the law, taxes are levied upon the so-called "assessed" value of all property, equal to one-fifth of the "full" value, which in reality is rarely more than about 70 to 80 per cent. of its "actual" value. The tax-rate is limited to 5 per cent. of the assessed value, for all purposes except State, school buildings, and bonded indebtedness taxes. When the

aggregate of all the taxes exceeds the limit of 5 per cent., the county clerk is required to reduce the rates for the various taxing bodies, so as to bring the total within the legal limit. As the county clerk has great power in establishing the rate, it is not very surprising that he could not and did not resist the temptation to favor those of the eight taxing bodies that were of the same political faith as he, to the disadvantage of the others, and the city government, the Board of Education, and the Library Board were for years the sufferers. Their proportion of the tax levy was regularly reduced to as low a figure as the law would possibly permit. The charter limit for the city rate is 2 per cent. For 1902 the rate was scaled down to 1.582, and for the year 1903 still further to 1.563, while the rates for the other taxing bodies were either increased or at least remained nearly the same, so that, although the valuation had been increased for these two years, the city, on account of the reduced rate, profited but very little by this fact. Out of the total amount of taxes, about twenty-five millions, raised within the city limits, less than 25 per cent. are allotted to the city government for its corporate purposes.

Of course, the proposed consolidation of nearly all the taxing bodies would in some degree remedy this defect, but as even after consolidation there will be at least three taxing bodies, the law should fix a definite rate for each of these and further clearly define the rights and powers of the county clerk in this direction, so that each body would know exactly where it stands.

Another change of the tax laws that would be most desirable for the city of Chicago would be the increase of the assessable value from one-fifth to the full value and the corresponding decrease of the rate from five to one per cent. While this change would apparently leave the result *in statu quo*, it would have the great advantage of making the valuation absolutely clear, and thus enable the people much better to discover any possible mistake on the part of either the property owner or the assessor. The average man can see no valid reason why the law should play hide-and-seek with the valuations. There is another advantage the city would secure by such a change of the revenue law. The constitution limits the bonded indebtedness of the State to "five per centum on the value of the taxable property therein," and the Supreme Court a few years ago decided that the term "value" in that clause must be interpreted to mean the "assessed value," although the makers of the consti-

tution knew nothing of "one-fifth" values or of any "assessed" values arbitrarily established by legislative enactment. To them the word "value" had only one meaning, and they hardly had the intention of reducing the power of cities to issue bonds to some arbitrary limit that the legislature might fix. Chicago to-day cannot issue a single dollar's worth of bonds, nor has it been able to do so for many years. The entire bonded indebtedness is but \$15,123,000, or less than eight dollars per capita of its population, and includes \$4,500,000 issued by the city in behalf of the World's Columbian Exposition, under authority of a special grant by the legislature. The remainder was issued before this generation, in the days after the great fire, in the early '70's, and the great city of to-day is thus prevented by this inheritance from the past to raise the funds for the many improvements so necessary for its welfare. The need for a bond issue is generally recognized, and the proposed constitutional amendment contains a clause specifically authorizing the legislature to pass a law permitting the city to become indebted to an amount in the aggregate not exceeding 5 per cent. of the *full* value of all property within its limits.

To secure this special law, or a general revision of the tax laws, necessary as it may be, is likely to prove a most difficult thing. The outside counties do not require these changes as much as Chicago, and it will therefore be no easy matter to win over enough legislators from those districts to overcome the opposition.

That something will be done by the legislature of 1905 is almost certain, and that this will not turn out to be worse than the present is also probable, as it is left to the people of Chicago finally to accept or reject any charter law that the General Assembly may pass. It will, therefore, be at least another year and a half before Chicago will be in the position to do anything towards the solution of the many problems it has before it.

Chicago has to-day the best City Council in its history. In seven years not a single measure has been passed by the Council that could arouse suspicion. Chicago has remained absolutely free from the corruption and scandal that has wrecked the reputation of so many fair cities in our land.

Political "pull" has disappeared from the municipal government, all of its nine thousand employees being under a strict civil service system, sought to be carried out honestly to the minutest

detail. Its system of accounting is to-day in excellent shape; slipshod methods have been abolished entirely; no private use of public property is granted without adequate compensation to the city treasury, and the government is making earnest efforts to conduct the administration in all its branches on business principles.

One of the great works that has been carried on for more than ten years and is fast nearing completion is that of elevating the railroad tracks within the city limits. Other cities have had to contribute from 30 to 60 per cent. of the cost of such work; Chicago succeeded not only in making the railroads bear the entire cost, with the exception of less than \$6000 per annum for maintenance of the city's track elevation department, but also in having the work carried on without interruption. Since May, 1892, when the work was begun, until December 31, 1903, not less than 80.67 miles of main tracks and 420.19 miles of other tracks have been elevated and 351 subways constructed at a total cost of about \$25,500,000, not a single cent of which came out of the pockets of the tax-payers. Under ordinances already passed and accepted by the railroad companies, 57.43 miles of main track and 279.76 miles of other tracks are yet to be elevated, and 186 subways to be constructed. The cost of the entire work yet to be completed under the ordinances is estimated at a little over \$18,000,000. Within a few years this great undertaking will have been completed, and then not a single foot of railway track, not a single deadly grade-crossing will remain to endanger the lives of the people.

Another important work being carried on by the city and nearing completion is the construction of a system of intercepting sewers which is designed to divert the flow of all sewage now being emptied into Lake Michigan, so that it will be carried into the Chicago River, and thence into the main drainage canal of the Sanitary District, thus obliterating the danger of polluting Chicago's water supply.

As Chicago has more than fifteen hundred miles of sewers, the magnitude of this undertaking can hardly be grasped. Since the work began in 1898, more than one hundred thousand lineal feet of intercepting sewers, having a diameter up to twenty feet, have been built at a total cost of about \$3,500,000, and what is still more remarkable, not one cent of this amount was obtained from taxation, the entire cost of the undertaking being defrayed out of the net

earnings of the water-works. Whether this system will forever keep the city's water pure, or whether it will become necessary to purify the supply by some system of filtration or other artificial purification, is a problem for the future.

A problem that is engaging the attention of many cities has, at least in part, been satisfactorily solved by Chicago,—the problem of performing municipal work by the direct labor plan as against the private contract system. In the construction of new land tunnels, the work had to be completed by the city under the direct labor plan, as the contractors had failed to carry out their contract and suspended operations. The city completed the work, which offered most serious obstacles, without difficulty, and at a cost less than the contract had provided for. To-day the city is engaged in constructing part of the above-mentioned intercepting sewers by direct labor, it having been found that the work can be performed by the city at a cost less than the lowest contract price offered. Not only does the city, by this system, profit through the savings in the original cost, but it also escapes thereby the exactions of contractors in the shape of bills for "extras," from which cause it has seriously suffered for many years.

The best test of the advantages of the direct labor system, however, has been in the work of collecting garbage. Until 1898 the city had awarded the work of removing the garbage to contractors. To-day the city employs the teams and the men individually, and the work is performed under the supervision of the ward superintendent cheaper and more satisfactorily to the public than under the contract system. While in 1897, the last full year of the contract system, eight thousand eight hundred garbage complaints were registered, this number has shrunk to about fourteen hundred in 1902, and nine hundred in 1903.

On the other hand, improvement work carried out by contract, such as street paving, is steadily getting more and more unsatisfactory, and its cost so high as to be nearly prohibitive, so that property owners who, under the law, have to pay for paving by special assessment, are averse to make any such improvements. Chicago, like many other cities, is in the grasp of a powerful contractors' combination, and it will remain helpless until, by charter amendment, the city is enabled to establish its own department of construction, under which all municipal work may be performed by the direct labor plan.

Providing for small parks and playgrounds in the overcrowded districts of the city is another problem that Chicago is solving at present. Despite its immense territory, Chicago has but a small park area, comprising not more than two thousand two hundred and eighty-five acres, of which nearly two thousand one hundred acres are part of the great park system in each of the three main divisions of the city. On account of their great distances from the densely populated district, these parks are not easily accessible to the masses of the people. This leaves but about one hundred and eighty-five acres for the small parks, which are very unequally distributed. In fact, not less than nine of the largest wards of the city, having an area of twenty-one thousand one hundred and forty-four acres and a total population of nearly five hundred thousand, have no park area at all.

The necessity of creating new breathing spots for the poorer classes became very urgent, and in November, 1899, Mayor Harrison, by authority of the City Council, appointed a Small Parks Commission, consisting of ten aldermen, a representative of each of the three regular park boards, and nine citizens. The commission decided to transfer the establishment of the small parks to the various park boards, and legislation was obtained from the General Assembly whereby these boards were authorized to acquire, improve, and maintain small parks or playgrounds not exceeding ten acres in area each. Further acts authorize the boards to issue \$2,500,000 in bonds for these purposes, leaving the expenditure of the moneys with the commissioners of the three park boards, the Small Parks Commission acting in an advisory capacity. Exhaustive reports were prepared dealing with the conditions which prevail in the districts of congested population remote from the existing parks, and recommendations made for small parks for the purpose of relieving these conditions.

These park boards are now engaged in the task of purchasing, either by private contract or by condemnation proceedings, the sites, and within a short time some twenty-five or thirty small parks will be added to Chicago's park area.

Meanwhile, the City Commission did not rest idly, but began to establish playgrounds. The Council granted for that purpose the use of property belonging to the city, and a small appropriation enabled it properly to equip these grounds and place them under

supervision of trained directors. Then several public-spirited citizens took an interest in the matter. Some gave the free use of land, others donated equipment, money, medals. Since the commission began its work three years ago it has established nine public playgrounds, which, during 1903, were attended by not less than seven hundred and thirty-four thousand boys and girls. The Council appropriated in these three years the total sum of \$56,500 for the salaries of the directors, purchase of equipment, maintenance of the grounds, and all other expenses. Circle, ball, and dance games, singing, marching, Maypole dances, and similar entertainments for the smaller children are conducted under the supervision of trained women, while athletic sports, gymnastics, drills, and games for the larger boys and girls are under supervision of the directors of the playgrounds and a general athletic director. In winter these grounds are converted into skating rinks.

While Chicago has been and is successfully solving all of these problems, each important, each bearing upon the well-being and the progress of its citizens, many other most serious problems demand immediate attention. But no matter how great the necessity, no matter how anxious the authorities, how clamorous the demand of the people, here Chicago for the present stands helpless because the solution of these problems rests upon the one *conditio sine qua non*,—money.

First of all comes the problem of providing for adequate police protection. Chicago expends annually about \$3,300,000, or more than one-half of its entire income from taxation, for police purposes. This is much less per capita than in other large cities. In 1901, according to Carroll D. Wright, New York expended for police purposes \$3.21 per capita; Philadelphia, \$3.20 per capita; St. Louis, \$2.88 per capita; Boston, \$5.03 per capita; Chicago, \$2.19 per capita. Although Chicago has grown in area and population, its expenditures for police purposes have remained nearly stationary for more than ten years. No matter how much the authorities tried, it was found impossible to provide for more police protection. From the lack of it, Chicago's good name has suffered more than from any other cause; has been exposed to the malicious attacks of ill-meaning individuals; has been made the target of unjust criticism from that part of the press whose political or personal antagonism, hatred, and prejudice against the administration blind it to the real

conditions. To such an extent has this been carried on, that even well-meaning citizens became prejudiced and were led to take steps that, instead of repairing Chicago's reputation, still more impair it. Even now a Citizens' Committee has been formed for "the suppression of crime," and large amounts of money are being raised for its purpose. It is said that they will begin work by investigating the Police Department.

In proportion to its area and population, Chicago has the smallest police force of any large city in the world. At present the total number of employees in the department, including clerks, drivers, keepers, matrons, operators, laborers, etc., is only three thousand two hundred and five, of which two thousand seven hundred and sixty-five are officers; of these, two thousand four hundred and forty-two are patrolmen. Even if every one of these would be available for actual patrol service, each one would have to guard a territory averaging fifty acres. But in fact not more than about thirteen hundred are available for patrol duty, the remainder being assigned to duty at street crossings, depots, docks, markets, city offices, courts, etc. That it is utterly impossible for any one man to guard properly so large a territory is plain.

That the officers, as a rule, do not shirk their dangerous duty is shown by the fact that the average number of arrests to each officer is greater in Chicago than in most other cities. In the year 1900 the number of arrests for burglary, robbery, and larceny to each member of the police force was: New York, 1.63; Chicago, 2.33; Philadelphia, 1.23; St. Louis, 0.93; Boston, 2.65. The average territory and average number of arrests to each member of the force in 1902 was: New York, 27.04 acres and 19 arrests; Chicago, 43.6 acres and 25.1 arrests; Philadelphia, 27.5 acres and 21.2 arrests; St. Louis, 31.9 acres and 20.8 arrests; Boston, 22.2 acres and 28.4 arrests.

Even if it were true that Chicago has a larger number of burglaries and robberies than other large cities, this, considering all the circumstances, would not be surprising, but no amount of criticism or investigations will afford any relief in this regard. There can be only one remedy, and that is the increase of the police force. If the various committees and societies would direct their efforts towards helping the city to get sufficient means for

this, they would render a real public service, and prove beyond contradiction that they really have the welfare of Chicago at heart.

For years Chicago has been most seriously confronted by the problem how to dispose of its garbage. This has become so acute that it must be solved in the near future. How in the face of the city's poverty this will be possible is a question that is worrying the authorities. To-day Chicago is still following the barbarous custom of depositing this garbage in clay holes or on low-lying lands, utilizing for filling what ought to be absolutely destroyed, thus making it a source of discomfort and a menace to the health of the community. Many of these clay holes have been filled. Residences have been built in such close proximity to such holes that their further use as dumping grounds had to be discontinued. New dumps had to be found far away from human habitation. But the stupendous growth of Chicago has made this so difficult, that most of the grounds used for dumping purposes are located from two to nine miles from the districts where the garbage is collected, and an average haul of five miles is required for each load. In consequence of this the cost of hauling away the garbage has been increased, and although the garbage-collecting service has been greatly improved by the direct employment of labor, as shown above, this rather increases than decreases the difficulty of disposing of it.

Chicago removes daily about four thousand cubic yards of garbage, at a cost, in 1902, of forty cents per cubic yard, and it is clear that with such immense quantities every possible available place will soon be filled. If the city had sufficient funds, it would be an easy matter to solve this problem, as the various methods of disposing of garbage have for years been carefully studied. City officials and Council committees have thoroughly inspected reduction and incineration plants in other cities, plans have been prepared, and every step has been taken to be in readiness as soon as the money is there. In 1900, the Council made an appropriation of \$100,000 with which to make a start in the right direction, but the money was not available and the matter had to be dropped. Private corporations offered to build reduction plants and take care of the city's garbage under a five years' contract, but the law prohibits the Council from making any contract extending over the time of its own life,—one year,—and, of course, capital withdrew. The present financial situation of the city does not hold out any encouragement, and the

solution of the problem will probably be held in abeyance until the legislature comes to the aid of the city next year.

The approaching solution of the transportation question has aroused the people of Chicago. For many years the city has had the worst transportation service in the world. For years the people have suffered from accommodations which have violated every conceivable rule of health, of comfort, and of decency, until they have lost all patience, and have made up their minds that there shall be an immediate and lasting change. The people of Chicago have thoroughly studied the transportation question ever since 1897, when the street railway corporations, after inducing the State legislature to pass the notorious "Allen" law, tried to obtain a prolongation of their franchises for fifty years. They signally failed in this, and so strong an opposition developed against the fifty-year law that many legislators who had voted for it were defeated at the polls, and the legislature of 1899 was forced to repeal it, leaving the law in its former status, which gives to cities the power to grant street railway franchises for a period not exceeding twenty years.

Since that time the street railway corporations have planned and schemed to obtain a renewal of the franchises on their trunk lines, which expired on July 31, 1903. Had they gone before the Council with anything like a reasonable proposition, had they shown any willingness to comply with the demands of the people as voiced by Mayor Harrison in his message of 1899, it may be presumed that they would have received a renewal of their franchises for twenty years without any difficulty. But such was not their policy. In that memorable message Mayor Harrison pointed out that in an extension of the street railway franchises the following five points must be considered:

1. Compensation based upon a percentage of the gross receipts.
2. A reduction of fare during the crowded hours of the day.
3. An improvement of the accommodations for the public.
4. A provision for municipal ownership of the lines at the expiration of the grant.
5. A requirement that before any ordinance granting an extension of franchise shall become operative, it shall first be submitted to a direct vote of the people, and receive popular endorsement.

These demands were not to the liking of the railway corporations; they did not believe that the people really wanted these things;

and they set out to defeat the mayor, in which effort they utterly failed. "The streets belong to the people" became the slogan of the campaigns.

Then the companies tried a new plan. They proclaimed that they would not need a new franchise; that their present franchises were valid until 1957 under an act they had obtained in 1865 over the veto of the then governor of Illinois, Richard J. Oglesby, prolonging the life of the companies to ninety-nine years. The methods employed in the passage of this bill were so notoriously venal, vicious, and shameless, that the press of the day openly charged the use of corruption funds, and the act, asserted to have been "conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity," was denounced in unmeasured terms from one end of the State to the other. Twenty years ago, in 1883, the question of the legality or illegality of this act was laid over for future consideration and adjudication. In the years which have since passed, no steps were taken to settle the dispute. As soon as the companies had unmasked their designs, the mayor and the Council immediately embodied in their conditions, and the people practically unanimously demanded, as an absolute prerequisite to an extension of franchise grants, a final and unequivocal surrender of whatever rights the companies may have obtained by this piece of legislation. The adjudication of any rights the companies may possibly have under this act is now pending in the courts.

To-day the situation in the street railway question is as follows: One of the companies, the Union Traction Company, went into bankruptcy some months ago and is in the hands of a receiver appointed by a federal judge, who will pass on the validity of the ninety-nine year act within a few weeks. It may be stated here that even if the courts should decide in favor of the act, the city could by a new car license ordinance—the old one just having expired—obtain a fairly adequate compensation for the use of the city's streets, while most of the other public demands could be secured through mandatory ordinances passed under the city's police powers.

The other company, the City Railway Company, is negotiating with the local transportation committee of the Council for a new twenty-year franchise, and an ordinance is expected to be submitted to the Council at a very early date. The company was willing to accede to all demands of the Council, and the only point of differ-

ence was the question of compensation, the committee demanding ten per cent.—many of its members twenty per cent.—of the gross income, while the company is offering a compensation of five per cent., same to be in lieu of all taxes and license fees. But very recently another snag was encountered. Some members of the Council committee demanded that provision be made in the ordinance enabling the city to take over the system after ten years. The mayor has stated that the period after which the city should have the right to buy the company's property should be less than twenty years, while the company has declared that it would consider no proposition for a period of less than twenty years. But even if an agreement between the company and the committee, or even the council, should be reached, it is very doubtful whether the company will get a twenty-year franchise or any franchise at all. For the ordinance, before it becomes operative, must be submitted to the people for approval or rejection. The mayor and the aldermen are pledged to the referendum, and there can be no doubt that they will faithfully stand by their pledges. What the people will do in case of the passage of an ordinance acceptable to the Council, no one can foretell. They are as confident as ever that the mayor will protect the rights of the people; but while they were suffering from the iniquities of the service, they have sought to inform themselves on all phases of the question; and while five or six years ago a fair franchise would have willingly been given, to-day a mighty cry is raised for municipal ownership of the street railways.

This desire for municipal ownership has gone farther than a mere wish for decent and comfortable facilities. Chicagoans have been educated to the idea "that in public ownership lies the sole, fair, just, and reasonable method of handling all those utilities, for the operation of which the practically exclusive use of public property is required." A large percentage of the people fully believe in this policy, because they have not only studied conditions elsewhere, but for many years they have witnessed two splendid examples of municipal ownership at home.

The city owns its water-works, which were acquired as early as 1854. Its mains, having an aggregate length of nearly nineteen hundred miles, extend into the remotest part of the city's territory; the service is in every way satisfactory, except as to the purity of the water at certain times,—a fault now being remedied. The rates

are exceedingly low, the meter rate ranging from ten cents per one thousand gallons when one hundred and sixty-five thousand gallons are used per month, to four cents per one thousand gallons when more than ten million gallons per month are required. The frontage rates per annum are on the basis of four dollars and fifty cents for a one-story house, from fifteen to eighteen feet wide, including all so-called sanitary fixtures.

The Water-Works Department, like all other city departments, is under strict civil service rule, and so successfully are its affairs administered that the revenues exceed the cost of maintenance about two millions of dollars per annum. The surplus is used for extending and improving the system.

The municipal electric street-lighting plant furnished another lesson in municipal ownership. The city began to manufacture its own electric light for lighting streets as early as 1887. In that year a power-house was erected and one hundred and five arc lights placed in operation at a total expenditure of \$39,976.25. At the end of the first ten years the city operated one thousand two hundred and fifty-four arc lights, and had expended for construction and operation during these ten years a total of \$1,693,222.51. If the same number of lights had been rented, the city would have had to pay the sum of \$1,269,445, without owning anything. Beginning with 1897, the number of lights was greatly increased, and to-day there are operated nearly five thousand city arc lights, at an average cost per lamp per year of \$53.51 (1902), while the city still rents about six hundred lights at an average cost of \$103 per lamp. In other words, for practically the same amount it would have cost the city to light the streets by means of rented arc lights, not only has the city operated its own lights, but has acquired five modern lighting plants, representing an investment of more than \$1,300,000. The total cost of lighting the streets of Chicago, including gas, gasoline, and all electric lights, representing a total candle-power of 11,600,000, in the year 1902, was \$936,179.18, as against a cost of \$936,372.43 in 1893 for lights with a total candle-power of 3,330,000.

Surely, practical lessons like these two were not lost, and, based upon them, the idea of municipal ownership gained a firm hold on the people of Chicago. Its strength was tested in the fall election of 1902 when two propositions were submitted to the people for

an expression of opinion. On the first question: "Are you in favor of municipal ownership of street railways?" 142,826 men voted in the affirmative, and 27,998 in the negative. The vote on the second question: "Are you in favor of municipal ownership of gas and electric light plants?" was 139,999 yes; 21,364 no. The total vote cast in the election was 282,507. While the result had no legal effect, it certainly showed beyond doubt the sentiment of the people.

The way to municipal ownership has been paved by the so-called Mueller law, passed in April, 1903. This law enables cities to own and operate their street railways, and further contains a provision that no franchise grant to a private corporation shall go into effect unless approved by the people, provided that ten per cent. of the voters petition for submission of the ordinance within sixty days after its passage by the Council. Headed by Mayor Harrison, a strong committee of public-spirited citizens of both parties appeared before the legislature, and so firm was their attitude, so convincing were their arguments, that the law was passed. It does not go into effect for Chicago until approved by a majority of the voters in the city. An ordinance submitting it to the people in the coming spring election will undoubtedly be passed by the City Council within a few days. At the same election there will be submitted to the people, under the public policy law, the following two questions bearing on this subject and petitioned for as provided in that law by 25 per cent. of the voters of the city:

1. Shall the City Council, upon the adoption of the Mueller law, proceed without delay to acquire ownership of the street railways under the powers conferred by the Mueller law?

2. Shall the City Council, instead of granting any franchises, proceed at once, under the city's police powers and other existing laws, to license the street railway companies until municipal ownership can be secured, and compel them to give satisfactory service?

As soon as the Mueller law has been accepted by the city, the legal obstacles to municipal ownership will be out of the way.

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